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1840.

14.

MENTAL CULTURE.

HINTS

ON THE BEST AND SHORTEST WAY OF CULTIVATING THE MIND;

ADDRESSED ESPECIALLY TO YOUNG MEN ENGAGED IN COMMERCIAL PURSUITS.

BY

A Student of University College, London.

Author of "Remarks on the System of Late Hours of Business," &c.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY RECOMMENDATION

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER FLETCHER, A.M.,

Of Finsbury Chapel.

'Hear counsel and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in the latter end."—Solomon.

'O value time, as wise men, while you have it; and not as miserable fools, when it is gone."—Richard Baxter.

SECOND THOUSAND.

LONDON:

WARD & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW;

R. BYFIELD, 21, CHARING CROSS.

MDCCC XL.

14.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

In issuing the Second Thousand, the writer would gratefully acknowledge the favourable reception which his Pamphlet has met with, and trusts that the corrections made, and the few remarks added, may render it more worthy of public patronage.

July, 1840.

BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA

INTRODUCTORY RECOMMENDATION.

I HAVE read the following Treatise with great care, and, must candidly acknowledge, with very considerable satisfaction, and some advantage. It is full of good sound sense and excellent practical remarks, founded on careful observation, and the result of considerable experience. It is not the production of a *theorist*, but of one who has trod the way, and who has profited by the occurrences he has met with on his journey.

Nothing is more important for man, in his present transient state of existence, than the *improvement of his time*. The remarks of the writer on this subject are striking and convincing. They will teach one to inquire, "What have I done, what am I doing, with a commodity more valuable than gold and jewels?"

The examples which are brought forward in illustration of the various subjects are well selected, and, if attentively studied, cannot fail to produce the most salutary impressions. How foolish it is for young men engaged in active life, whether commercial or mechanical, to consider a course of study and reading, in reference to them, a hopeless chimerical enterprise, completely beyond their reach! They are greatly mistaken. This Treatise demonstrates their mistake. I feel confident that, if this Pamphlet is perused with that reflecting attention

and interest which its objects merit, under the blessing of Heaven, it will be the means of raising up into activity faculties and energies which are now dormant in many youthful bosoms; and also the means of stimulating individuals to enter upon a course of useful reading and study which will render them a blessing to their species, and the ornaments of society. In this manner they will be introduced into those pleasant and honourable paths where they will breathe the wholesome atmosphere of true wisdom, and be withdrawn from those courses of carelessness, ignorance, and licentiousness, which lead to infamy and ruin.

This work is worthy of an extensive circulation, and, hoping that it will gain access to thousands of families and counting-houses, I now confidently recommend it to the attention of the YOUTH of these realms.

ALEX. FLETCHER.

8, *Finsbury Circus, London,*
13*th February*, 1840.

PREFACE.

THE present Pamphlet has been written with a design to awaken in commercial young men a desire for mental and moral culture, and to afford some instruction in prosecuting a work so important and difficult.

The writer is aware that books have been written to aid in forming the intellectual character of the student, and the value of these books he is not backward in appreciating; but it will be found that they are more adapted to those intended for professions, than those engaged in mercantile affairs

If any one more capable than himself had undertaken to offer to such some hints on self-culture, he would gladly have relinquished a task for which he feels but imperfectly qualified. As, however, nothing has been written, as far as he is aware, specifically to assist commercial young men in the work of mental improvement according to their present position in society; and as he is not altogether ignorant of the difficulties which impede their mental progress by having once had to contend with such difficulties himself, he has been induced to suggest some hints in the hope of promoting their intellectual and moral welfare. He has been further induced, from his having urged in a former pamphlet the justice and importance of closing business at a reasonable time, thinking that, as some

had adopted this system, it might not be unprofitable to give a few directions on the right improvement of leisure hours.

As his remarks are cursorily made, he has sought only to express them in as concise and lucid a manner as possible; and if he need offer any apology for the quotations he has given from other writers, it must be that he deems it always advisable to allow another to speak on the point in question when that other can do it better than himself.*

He would only add his sincere desire that what he has attempted for the benefit of a class of individuals in whose best welfare he shall always feel interested, may not have been attempted in vain.

W. B.

Southwark, January, 1840.

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* The Writer would gratefully acknowledge the assistance he has derived from "Todd's Student's Manual"—an invaluable work, which, though designed principally for regular students, will nevertheless prove of great service to all "concerned to cultivate their minds and to be respectable and happy in life."

HINTS

ON THE

IMPROVEMENT OF THE MIND.

The human mind has been justly said to be the glory of man, and the highest display of the wisdom and power of the Infinite Creator.

It is his indestructible and immortal part; it is that which assimilates him to the moral likeness of his Maker, which gives him a pre-eminence in the scale of animal existence, and which constitutes him lord of creation. The world was made for his habitation, and all its rich productions, whether exposed to view on the outspread lap of nature, or found secreted beneath the soil on which he treads, are designed to minister to his use. It is, however, by that noble endowment of his nature, which we term reason, that he is enabled to make the material objects that surround him the supporters of his existence, and the promoters of his happiness. In this we see the vast superiority of mind over matter, and to what an illimitable extent the former may be capable of rendering the latter the source or medium of numberless enjoyments. In confirmation of this, we need only adduce the illustrious names of Davy, Watt, and Arkwright, men, by the strength of whose intellect, society is now favoured with many of the conveniences of life. But we may observe, that though mind is so superior to matter, in whatever form it may be presented to us, its vigour and power are in a great measure attributable to human discipline and culture, without which it is probable that many who have astonished the world by their discoveries of truth, would have quitted the stage of life without accomplishing any work that could perpetuate the remembrance of their names.

The human mind is capable of improvement, and no boundary can be given beyond which it shall not advance. Man is a progressive being, and enters upon his existence with

all the capabilities of progression. His reason at first is feeble, but strengthening and expanding with the growth of his physical powers, becomes more capable of action and of training, until, by its right exercise in the acquisition of knowledge, it becomes a great director, not only of individual actions, but ofttimes of the movements of nations, while it has left scattered over the earth the manifestos of its power.

The dissimilarity between the fierce Indian, exulting over the slaughtered victims of the battle-field, and the lofty mind of a Newton calmly contemplating the celestial courses of the planets, is immensely great; but this dissimilarity is not so much to be attributed to anything inherent in the mind of the one, which is not in the mind of the other, as to the mental discipline and culture which the one has enjoyed, and to which the other is a total stranger.

There is mind enough in the savage to study the science of the heavens, and to expatiate in the boundless region of philosophy, but no cultivating hand has directed its growth, nor watered it from the fount of knowledge. Mind, wherever it is found, is treasure, but it may be as treasure hidden, buried under ruins, and wasting away.

The marble hewn from the quarry shows neither its value nor its beauty, till the skilful hand of the sculptor has given to it form, and brought to view its purple veins.

These truths may appear so trite as to render the statement of them superfluous, but our familiarity with truths is often the cause of our slight appreciation of them, and since the fact of the superiority of mind over all material systems impels so few to its right cultivation, it cannot be too frequently stated, or stated in too impressive a manner. The greater number of young men, it is to be feared, pass through life with a comparative indifference as to correct formation of character and true cultivation of mind, whilst it is painfully cognizable that very many yield themselves to the domination of vain and fashionable amusements, or to the blandishments of a destroying sensuality. Now whatever may be the views of such respecting the nobility of their mental nature, we cannot hesitate to affirm, if we judge them by their acts, that they are not very correct or elevated. We could ill believe that the proprietor of a landed estate set a high value upon it, if he permitted an exuberance of weeds and brambles to infect it in every part, and allowed the venerable mansion, that was once the pride of some chivalrous lord, to moulder into ruins; so in like manner, to permit the noble structure of the

mind to lapse into a feeble and dilapidated state, is an unfailing sign of a wrong estimation of its intrinsic value.

To neglect the culture of the mind is to abuse a gift which worlds could not bestow. To be in the possession of reason, is to be in the possession of a treasure that lays its possessor under the greatest obligations of gratitude, and in the most imperative manner bids him esteem, and use it aright. Every gift with which Heaven has blessed man, has been bestowed for some definite and noble end. He was not made rational to perform irrational acts. The eye, was it not given to see—the ear to hear—and the mind to judge, to reflect, and to reason? If the organ of sight or hearing be defective in performing its functions, we immediately seek for a remedy; and if the mind, from sluggishness or imbecility, be incapable of rightly judging and reasoning concerning subjects which involve the best interests of man, ought not a specific to be sought for?

But are there not to be found sufficient reasons why you should attend to mental culture in the mere advantages you would derive from it? Apart from all other considerations, it can be affirmed to be absolutely important in the benefit it confers upon those who prosecute it; in the elevation it gives them over the vulgar and illiterate; in the respect which it obtains for them from others, and in the power it affords to act in the various callings of human life. It must be admitted, that he who possesses a mind strengthened and sharpened by an assiduous application to the pursuits of study, takes a higher stand in society, and has a greater influence to exert, than the man who has only mental energy enough to go the mechanical round of his daily duty. The former has over the latter many advantages; he feels that he is not out of his element, when linked in conversation with an intelligent individual, on topics which have not an immediate connection with the engagement of his secular sphere; he shrinks not from grappling with the arguments of an opponent, nor remains passive when his views are assailed with the glossed invectives of a pedant, while the other is obliged to hear all, and bear all, being either unable to distinguish clearly between truth and error, or feeling himself only capable of giving his assent to the one, and of observing silence as to the refutation of the other. He feels in the company of the intellectual, a kind of fear, that makes the time to him a time of bondage, and the conversation irksome and strange. He feels that he cannot sympathise with it, nor join in it with pleasure and freedom; and with such feelings he waits for an opportunity to

make his exit, as anxiously as would a fledged captive to escape from its prison cage.

Such individuals often deplore their mental destitution, the deficiency of their youthful education, and their neglect in not making up in after-life for the meagre instruction of the school-house;—they feel their littleness and insignificance as compared with others—they wish they could experience that mental fortitude which results from mental discipline and intellectual culture—they bewail their defects, but the task of remedying them appears so formidable that they fall back from the attempt, and continue, from want of a steady and noble resolution, to endure the penalties of ignorance and wear its slavish chains.

Now it is to such, as well as to those who have already given some attention to the pursuits of knowledge, that we desire to offer a few hints on the subject of mental improvement, in the hope that they may incite some to this commendable work, and assist others in the prosecution of it.

The first step, we think, to be taken by commercial young men towards this object is, to rid themselves of the erroneous notion that it is not necessary for them to know much—that, as commercial individuals, a moderate degree of mental culture will suffice. This notion has entailed upon thousands the miseries of ignorance, and will ever prove injurious while it is suffered to have a lodgment in the head. Apart from what we have already said on the claims that are incumbent upon us to cultivate the mind, arising from its superlative value, and from the pleasures which spring from such cultivation, on which we could largely dwell, it is highly serviceable to us in whatever station of life we are called to occupy. The man with a mind disciplined—a memory retentive—a judgment sound—an understanding acute, must surely possess advantages over him who is destitute of these mental qualities. Whatever may be your trade or calling, the acquisition of knowledge will not unfit you for its duties, but, on the contrary, will the better qualify you for their discharge. 'Knowledge is power,' and whether it be possessed in the shop—the counting-house—the forum—the pulpit—or in the senate-house, it is still power, and power of the highest order and most enviable kind. "Nothing can be more erroneous than the idea, that to discipline and expand the mind with general knowledge unfits a man devoted to business for his particular calling. It is a libel on mercantile, agricultural, and mechanical employments to assert that they are furthered by ignorance, and that the less a man knows beyond them the

better it is for his business." The writer from whom the above extract is taken states, that "a gentleman of large wealth, and of most estimable character and influence, informed him that when he first became an apprentice he took lodgings in a boarding-house, with eleven other young men. A part of them solicited of the lady who kept the house the favour of studying in her dining-room, a prescribed portion of the evening, and of having the room kept still for that purpose. The others refused to come to this arrangement, and while their companions were studying, they were out spending their evenings in theatres and other places of amusement and dissipation. The difference between the characters and prospects of these two classes gradually increased. Every one of those who wasted their evenings in amusement and pleasure subsequently failed in business, and finally came to *nothing*; *while* all those who devoted their leisure time to study succeeded well in business, and, with the exception of one, who has since died, they are still living, as distinguished and valuable citizens."

All persons are daily called upon, more or less, to exercise their judgment and reason upon matters relative to themselves, and at times also on things concerning the welfare of others; and will not the advantages of a cultivated mind be then materially *felt*? An intelligent man is so in any occupation; you cannot but discern it. If he be not acquainted with any particular department of business on which he may be solicited to offer a remark, he will display his wisdom either by observing silence or by making some collateral observations which will at least be acceptable, if not particularly useful; while an ignorant individual would probably have assumed a knowledge of it, and have condemned himself as a fool by so presuming.

The man of knowledge cannot but manifest it. It is a light within him that must shine forth, either in a greater or less degree; and though for a time circumstances may partially eclipse it, you can no more fail in perceiving it than you can the light on the distant rock though it cast its rays but feebly over the dark expanse.

If, however, commercial young men prize the benefits of mental culture only in proportion as they may augment their secular gain, we confess that their estimate of it must be comparatively low and positively unjust. Such a view of intellectual improvement is mean and contracted, and only confirms the ignorance of those who look at it in this light.

Are the relationships which a mercantile individual sustains only those of a mercantile nature? and is his sphere of action bounded by the narrow precincts of his workshop or counting-house? Were he a solitary and independent unit he might be content with such knowledge as would be sufficient to acquire the means of animal existence; but he forms part of a community, and, from the connexion which subsists between the several parts, corresponding duties are necessarily required to be performed. The good of the whole is made up of the good of the parts—the moral improvement of each member of a community involves the happiness of the whole; but the secular advancement of each does not involve the moral and intellectual elevation of the community itself.

To attend then only to what increases your commercial knowledge, or your mercantile profits, is not the way to seek the real good of society at large, nor, to a certain extent, your own good. Besides, you have, or may have, the relationships of husband and parent to sustain; to become a co-operator in the great work of moral reformation, and of patriotic benevolence; to connect yourself with associations which call for the full exercise of sound judgment and strong reason; and will you then discover that you have need of no more mental illumination than would enable you to detect an error in the calculation of pounds, shillings, and pence, or to direct the management of your own business? Will you not rather feel the necessity there is of forming a correct habit of thought and investigation, and judicious plans for the acquisition of knowledge that you may act with confidence and power? It is when an individual is called to occupy such positions in society, that, if he has neglected the cultivation of such habits, memory is most ready to recall to his sorrow a thousand opportunities which he has suffered to pass by unimproved, while conscience, once slumbering but now awake, covers him with shame by her rebukes. Let the present time, then, be improved; and "deeply possess your minds with the vast importance of a good judgment, and the rich and inestimable advantages of right reasoning."

A most important element in mental culture is the right and judicious improvement of time. "Take care of the pence," cries the economist, "the pounds will take care of themselves;" and in a similar spirit would we urge upon you to note the passage of the small subdivisions of your leisure. Remember, that "time is ever on the wing;" and when any portion of it has fled unemployed it cannot be recalled—it has fled for ever.

"Time" says a philosopher, "is my estate." Alas! how many are the prodigals of this (perhaps their only, or at least) their invaluable possession. You will not try to improve your time, unless you are first impressed with the necessity of doing so.

Though your time for mental cultivation be little, and, (compared with what those have who are to be engaged in professional pursuits,) exceedingly contracted, yet it may be well improved, and be the means ultimately of rendering you respectable in the acquisition of knowledge. Because your *time* is limited it should no more be permitted to pass away *unemployed*, than food should be rejected because the quantum is not proportioned to your appetite. All in mercantile pursuits have not the same time, but he who has the least may advantageously improve it. Do what you can, and you will, at least, have the consolation of knowing that you are free from the charge of folly for not doing more. Young men are too apt to look at the daily amount of time they have, rather than what the accumulation of it would be at the end of one or five years. Five minutes a day would amount to above thirty hours in a year, and one hour a day to more than a month in the year. Let such time then be diligently employed in the pursuit of knowledge, and the result, at the end of one or five years, will show what the right employment of minutes can do. "He that shall walk, with vigour, three hours a day, will pass, in seven years, a space equal to the circumference of the globe." It is the doing of something every day that brings out at last the *multum*. "It was a matter of astonishment to all Europe that Luther, amidst all his travels and active labours, could present a very perfect translation of the whole Bible. But a single word explains it all. He had a rigid system of doing something every day. '*Nulla dies*,' says he, in answer to the question how he did it, '*nulla dies sine versu*;'* and this, in a few years, brought him to the close of the whole Bible."

We have many recorded instances of individuals devoting their spare moments to intellectual pursuits, and successfully overcoming the most formidable difficulties, when poverty and secular drudgery seemed combined to crush their aspiring souls.

Thomas Simpson, a weaver in very humble circumstances, prosecuted the study of mathematics, during his leisure time, with such diligence and patience, that, in a few years, he was

* "No day without a line," that is, he suffered no day to pass without doing something in the work of translating.

enabled to give to the world some treatises on this most important science, and ultimately to obtain the mathematical chair in one of our colleges.

William Hutton, a stocking-weaver, experiencing many hardships and privations in his youthful days, rose to the occupation of a respectable bookseller; and, by assiduously employing, amidst all his difficulties, what time he could steal from his daily duties, rendered himself capable of writing several historical works, one of which is a "History of Birmingham" which has maintained a high reputation among the class of productions to which it belongs.

James Ferguson first acquired the elementary principles of natural philosophy while attending his father's sheep, and afterwards, while in the service of a farmer and a miller. This great man was also enabled to acquire, by himself, the art of painting, by which he obtained, for many years, a comfortable subsistence, besides making such advancement in philosophical studies, as to enable him to publish several works as the result of his investigations.

Daniel De Foe, a well-known writer, whose name is familiar to most as that of the author of "Robinson Crusoe," was apprenticed to a hosier, and afterwards commenced in that trade for himself; but before he had finished his apprenticeship, he had acquired sufficient knowledge to give to the public a political tract.

A book might be filled with the names of those who, though immured in commercial labour, have found both time and opportunity for the work of self-improvement; and who, after the lapse of years, have had their names appended to the list of distinguished literary and scientific men. We cite these instances to show what may be done even by those engaged in mercantile occupations; not that all may become authors, nor even attain to that intellectual elevation, which those did whose names we have just mentioned; but that all may in some measure rise in intelligence, and become more useful and more happy as they advance in years.

The time for self-improvement which many commercial men have had who have given to the world powerful proofs, both of the extent of their knowledge and the strength of their intellect, was, as yours may be, very limited; and, if it be asked, how it was that they accomplished what they did, we answer, by diligently using aright what time they had, by seizing upon every opportunity, and plying every energy of their minds with untiring industry to the acquisition of knowledge.

The cry too often heard, "We can do nothing for want of time and opportunity," will rarely escape the lips of the lover of knowledge; he will look abroad on what has been accomplished by others similarly placed; he will endeavour to catch something of their spirit—to redeem the moments as they speed their rapid course, and perseveringly pursue the work of mental cultivation, until he takes his stand in society above the multitude who bewail their ignorance, but who have not the noble resolution to employ the time they have to deliver themselves from its ignominious bondage.

With many young men their deficiencies in knowledge are not so much attributable to the want of time, as to the want of inclination, and more than all, of active perseverance. Indolence has been, and still is, the secret cause of the adversity which overclouds the path of many an individual. The student sitting under the "academic bower" has been smitten with this leprosy, and lost for ever that moral power which he might otherwise have acquired and exercised to the good of thousands; while others too in circumstances less advantageous have felt its withering influence, utterly preventing the attainment of that knowledge which might have been secured.

Indolence consists in the indulgence of a heavy, inactive disposition, leading you continually to delay till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day; or. when not leading you to postpone, causing you to perform your work in a manner that leaves it only half-done. When you read or study you should concentrate the energies of your mind upon the subject, and fix your attention, as if you were in quest of gold beneath a foreign soil. Two persons will read the same book; the one will read with the application of the mind, and remember a great portion of its contents; the other will read with a kind of laxity, and forget them. It is a lamentable circumstance that so many forget what they read, and appear to have little profited from what they have done towards improving their intellectual powers. Such may complain of their memories—the early deficiencies in their mental training—the obtuseness of their minds; but the chief ground of complaint will in general be found to lie in the lurking indolence which they suffer to infest them when applying themselves to the acquisition of knowledge. You do not easily forget *that*, to obtain which you have expended considerable labour, and put forth all the ingenuity of your mind. If you be determined on the acquisition of knowledge, and have a just appreciation of its value, you will make corresponding exertions, and secure as your own what you

purposed to acquire. Besides this diligence in the work of self-improvement, perseverance is absolutely necessary. Some circumstance may have convinced you of your mental wants; an accidental interview with some intelligent individual engaged like yourself in mercantile pursuits, may have shown to you your ignorance as you had not seen it before, and more deeply impressed upon your mind the necessity of mental culture. For a time, you prosecuted this work with energy; but the little progress you seemed to make, the extent of ground you had to traverse, and the difficulties that rose up as if to forbid a further advance, damped the ardour of your spirits, relaxed the energies of your mind, weakened your noble purpose, and induced you to relinquish the task as too formidable to be accomplished. With very many has this been the case, and it is probable that nearly all students have had, at times, some such feelings of discouragement. But the fact of such discouragements not being uncommon in the experience of students, should act as a stimulus to go forward, remembering that if others have persevered and overcome, you may go and do likewise. All who desire to obtain learning, whatever may be the amount they determine to possess, should believe that "there is no royal road to it," that its rugged path must be trodden not only with toil, but perseverance. To walk this path a little way, and then to turn back, is worse than not to have entered upon it at all.* "Forward" should be your motto, and if the path be not smooth, nor your senses regaled by the odour of flowers, the music of birds, or the murmuring of brooks, yet remember you are approaching something that shall amply reward for the tediousness and cheerlessness of the way, that the tract which to your senses seems a desert one, leads to a Canaan.

Could learning of any kind be attained without effort and continuous application, the sluggard might share with the industrious the laurels of literary fame; and one of the primary ends of study, the discipline of the mind, would then be unrealised. Learning would lose half its value did it not strengthen the mind, which it cannot do unless there be labour and perseverance given in its pursuit. Would you read Euclid? you must be prepared to have your patience tried, and the utmost energy of your mind called into constant play. You may

* Those who commence the study of some art or science, and almost as soon give it up, suffer themselves to be easily conquered, and become liable to commit themselves by speaking of that which is to them alone a mysticism; on this account it had been better had they not commenced.

read a tale without this, but, in that case, you must not expect to reap the same advantages as you would from reading Euclid. That which is acquired at little expense is generally worth little. We do not set much value upon that which cost us small trouble to obtain; but that which we obtain at the cost of much time and labour we are disposed to regard as very valuable. A writer remarking on the boast of one that he wrote his own memoirs (a large octavo) in six or eight days, says, "It cost him nothing; and, what is very natural, it is worth nothing." Difficulties, then, in the way of obtaining knowledge, will be beneficial to you, if they incite you, as they should do, to greater industry and perseverance to overcome them. Besides, is there not a pleasure in overcoming difficulties to which the indolent and irresolute are altogether strangers? The warrior counts not upon so triumphant a return from the battle-field, when the enemy has surrendered without opposition, as when, by his courage and military skill, he has obtained a complete victory; and so does he feel a higher pleasure, and is conscious of a nobler triumph, who has climbed the rugged steep of learning, thrust down every obstacle that checked his progress, and seized the treasure as his own, than if he had calmly walked to take possession of it without a single struggle. Few have become even respectable in mental attainments, much less distinguished for them, without having been compelled to maintain a spirit of untiring industry and unabated perseverance; and, at the same time, to admit that the difficulties which required such industry and perseverance were essential to the strengthening and improving of their minds. Cultivate, then, the habit of industry, and with it that of perseverance.

Having mentioned some of the requisites for prosecuting a course of study, it is necessary to answer a question that may now very naturally be put. What department of learning, or what books are best for commercial young men to become acquainted with, in order to fit them for more usefulness in the stations which they occupy in society? In answering this question, the writer feels some difficulty, as the tastes of men in reference to the different departments of knowledge are very varied, and their daily engagements such as to render the course of self-improvement which one might take, not altogether adapted to another. The shipwright would be more consistent in cultivating the science of mechanics than that of botany, and the builder in studying geometry rather than geology. It is wise then to direct your attention, first, to the study of that which may be directly or indirectly connected with the employment

in which you are to labour, and by which you are to support yourself through life.

"Business, as well as other subjects, has its great original and elementary principles. It is a science, yet how few consider it as such! How many are the mechanics, merchants, and farmers who do not understand the principles on which their business proceeds; who only acquire a little round of practical detail, in which their minds move like a horse in a mill! They know that, for some reason, a sharp tool cuts better than a dull one, and that it is well to sharpen the tool that is dull; they know how to keep an account of debt and credit, how to buy and sell, when they sell at loss or profit, and how to raise their prices when they can get more; they know the appropriate soil, dressing, and cultivation for different crops, and how to dispose of the produce; but they never think of looking for that elementary and scientific knowledge of these things which gives to the mind expansion, elevation, independence, and power. The men who do this are those who eventually stand at the head of their departments, and give laws to the busy world." To desire a knowledge of things only as it may be converted into gold, argues a narrow soul and a barren mind; and those greatly err who imagine that it does not belong to them to be able to explain any thing more of the nature of the commodities in which they traffic than what is actually necessary to make use of in their barter; and on the other hand, do they err who consider that to understand what is connected with their business is all the knowledge they need as to this life. To give the attention of the mind principally to that by which you live is no more than justice requires, and reason approves; but to give your attention to no other object is unworthy of your nature—to do the one is right, to do the other is wrong. The writer once knew a young man, a butcher by trade, who was greatly devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, and who was in the habit of rising early in the morning, even in the winter, to study the anatomy of the sheep with a view to the study of the anatomy of the human body. This was nobleness of purpose, and evinced a superior mind.

Although, in all cases, the study of that which bears an affinity to your secular calling may not be productive of pecuniary gain, (and for this reason the study is often forsaken,) yet, in many cases, the contrary holds true. The mason might not find it pecuniarily advantageous to him to know that a stone is a number of particles closely united together by the laws of cohesion; but the accountant might find it advantageous

to know the philosophy of arithmetic, and the principles of algebraic calculations. The coal merchant might not find a pecuniary benefit accrue from understanding the chemical properties of coal, but the farmer might find it very advantageous to know the chemical properties of the soil.

A knowledge of the French language would prove useful to the greater portion of commercial young men. It is often connected with the transactions of their commercial duties, and offers pecuniary advantages. "In carrying on of trade, and in the affairs of merchants, it is frequently of absolute necessity to be able to speak and write French. A young man, whether in trade of wholesale or of retail, and especially in the counting-house of a merchant, is worth a great deal more when he possesses the French language than when he does not." Besides, a young man makes a more creditable appearance in the commercial world when he is conversant with this language than when he staggers at a French sentence, either spoken or written. It ought to be the ambition of young men employed in commercial pursuits to render themselves as valuable as they can, and to take as respectable a standing as is attainable.

We have said that there is a difficulty in directing the minds of commercial young men as to what is most beneficial for them to study, arising from the variety of their occupations, and the difference of their intellectual tastes; yet there is a mental improvement, out of their respective callings, which is most important, whatever may be the stations they fill: a certain amount of knowledge which all should possess, if they have any desire to be distinguished from such grovelling minds as have no sympathy with any thing but what is associated with their animal existence.

The first study, then, that claims your attention, and which ought to be taken up whatever be your occupation, is that of your mother tongue.* "Bad grammar," says the ingenious Cobbett, "is only another word for nonsense." You will, probably, think that you acquired a sufficient knowledge of your own language during your school-days; you may have done so; but, generally speaking, those who forsake this study when they finally forsake the school-house are rather doggerel

* The writer has not so low an opinion of the attainments of commercial young men as to suppose that the advice he offers on the study of their own language can be needed by many, especially in a day when institutions are established for giving instruction in this as well as in other departments of knowledge; yet, as the same cannot be said of all, he has considered it necessary not to omit making some remarks on a study so important as that of the English language.

grammarians. It is one thing to write free from positive inaccuracies, and another to write good English; and although the one may do for a commercial man, the other would do better. Good diction, either in speaking or writing, stamps respectability upon an individual.

Nothing evidences more clearly an uneducated mind than an ill-written letter, if it does not evidence an ignorant mind; for, those who have made themselves intelligent by observation and reading have generally acquired the art of writing with propriety. The study of your own tongue should be considered first in place and chief in importance; and, if you consider what the art of grammar is, this will be apparent. An author has well remarked, that, "The actions of men proceed from their thoughts. In order to obtain the co-operation, the concurrence, or consent of others, we must communicate our thoughts to them. The means of this communication are words, and grammar teaches us how to make use of words. Therefore, in all ranks, degrees, and situations of life, a knowledge of the principles and rules of grammar must be useful; in some situations it must be necessary to the avoiding of really injudicious errors, and in no situation which calls on a man to place his thoughts upon paper, can the possession of it fail to be a source of self-gratification, or the want of it a cause of mortification and sorrow." Whatever you may have studied, if you have not studied this you cannot rise in society; or, if you do rise, it must be by a display of mighty intellectual power. Cultivate, then, this study, and especially as it may be done at the expense of little time and little labour.*

Perhaps, the study that claims next your attention, is that of history, and that of English history in particular. Few young men, even of common education, are entirely ignorant of its leading events; but it is one thing to read history, and another to make it the subject of systematic study. It is not to be taken up in the course of your general reading, but to have allotted for it specific times, in which you should peruse it with constant reference to geography and chronology, which have been called "the eyes of history." It is not difficult to perceive the importance of this study, for it imparts to you a knowledge of human nature: it shows to you man in all ages, in all countries, and in all conditions; the gradual progress of civilisation, the grand development of human intellect, and the influence of circumstances in aiding the

* The writer would recommend the study of Cobbett's Grammar with Lennie's.

formation of the moral and political character of communities. It is replete with moral lessons exhibiting the instability of human power, and the ruinous consequences of pride and ungovernable ambition; it teaches you that true greatness must consist in something more than rank or station; that moral excellence alone exalteth, and gives dignity and power to man. The attentive student of history cannot fail of rendering himself a pleasing and instructive companion; he can always draw from his own memory matter for the most profitable conversation, and feels capable of adding fresh interest to almost any subject by the introduction of new facts or pleasing illustrations.

With some commercial young men more than an ordinary share of time offers for mental cultivation, and to the attention of such we would strongly recommend the study of the mathematics. This science is of too great an extent to allow of your obtaining more than a small knowledge of it, yet this knowledge is sufficient to secure the end you should chiefly have in view in this study, *viz.*, mental discipline. Nothing can so well discipline your mind as mathematics; they will teach you to think deeply and accurately, and strengthen your reasoning faculties. "Pure mathematics," says Bacon, "do remedy and cure many defects in the wit and faculties intellectual; for if the wit be dull they sharpen it, if too wandering, they fix it, if too inherent in the sense they abstract it." You might practise arithmetical calculations, read a portion of Euclid, and acquire the art of solving algebraical questions with a moderate degree of industry, and the advantages would far exceed all the labour you would have to bestow.* The first and great object of education is to discipline the mind; and, though you cannot go through that systematic course of education which is necessary to discipline the mind in all its parts, yet you may go a great way towards it; and you should regard this as of more importance than the mere acquisition of knowledge. If you possess knowledge, and do not know how to use it, your knowledge is of little worth. It is certainly something to possess tools, but then they are not of much value if we know not how to use them. You may read through volumes, but what of all this, if your memory be weak and treacherous. The writings of a Locke would be of no benefit to you unless your mind were strengthened sufficiently to understand and examine their great

* For treatises on mathematics, as well as other branches of science, those published by the Society for Diffusing Useful Knowledge are the best that can be recommended, at least, for those to whom this pamphlet is addressed.

truths. Let perception be quick, reason strong, and memory retentive, and then you will read to immense advantage. In recommending the study of the mathematics, the writer cannot forbear giving the remarks made by a tutor to his pupils, of whom he had the honour to be one:—"It was not without reason that the Greeks bestowed on this study the title of the learning; it well deserves the highest encomiums. Languages may become obsolete, systems of philosophy may spring up, flourish, fade, and be forgotten; even what we are apt to account facts in natural history, may, by future discoveries, be proved to be fictions; but the truths of mathematics are unchangeable and indisputable, time cannot alter them, scepticism cannot obscure them. It would be difficult to point out, in the whole compass of human knowledge, one portion which so much tends to the enlargement of the mind and the discipline of its powers, as the study of mathematics. It produces a habit of patient investigation, of calm and dispassionate judgment; it accustoms the mind to distinguish between that which is true and that which is false; it takes nothing for granted that can possibly be gainsayed; it ascends from truths simple and easy of apprehension, truths that no man in his senses will venture to impugn—to the highest range of human thought and human intellect, while every step in the passage is as firmly fixed as the eternal rocks."

There are other studies which you might profitably pursue to a certain extent, such as mechanics, chemistry, and like subjects of natural philosophy, which are both useful and entertaining; but we dwell not upon these, since few into whose hands this tract may fall will have both the time and taste for such studies, and since the three we have already dwelt upon are, in our opinion, sufficient, as subjects of systematic study, to answer the ends which those destined to commercial pursuits may need and desire. Nevertheless, we would prescribe no boundary to your advance in either art or science. These worlds are as open to you as to others, and it is as much your prerogative, when circumstances permit, to enter and explore them, as it is his whose name, as a philosopher, is engraven on the roll of immortality. "For the ground of a man's culture lies in his nature, not in his calling. His powers are to be unfolded on account of their inherent dignity, not their outward direction. He is to be educated because he is a man, not because he is to make shoes, nails, or pins. A trade is plainly not the great end of his being; for his mind cannot be shut up in it: his force of thoughts cannot be exhausted on

it. He has faculties to which it gives no action; and deep wants it cannot answer." We would, in leaving this part of our subject, urge upon you the necessity of disciplining the mind by diligent, persevering, and systematic study; "of bringing it under proper subjection, of making it become obedient to you, and of fitting it for future acquisitions and future usefulness."

We now come to make some observations on *general reading*. Many who have not time or sufficient physical energy after the labours of the day to pursue a systematic course of study, have some moments, as well as strength enough, to enjoy and profit by general reading; and to such, as well as others, some hints on this head may not be altogether unacceptable.

Here we enter upon a field as extensive as the boundless ocean; a field amid whose beauteous flowers are plants of deadliest poison; and amid whose paths that wind to retreats of light and loveliness, are those that conduct to the recesses of gloom—to the very shadow of death. On entering upon such a track in quest of truth, you need a chart to direct you where it lies; and especially do those need direction as to what books are best to read, whose scanty time would render the reading of such as are corrupt or trivial doubly injurious. It may be said of reading, as of making, books, there is no end. You may read much and know little, and read little and know much. How important then to know what books to read, and how they should be read! In answering the first question, we cannot do better than commence by telling you what you should *not* read.

We would say, then, read not works of fiction. Discard the novelist as the insinuating destroyer of the mind—as the attractive, but treacherous and murderous, companion of youth. The novel may seem to you in your dull and heavy moments as a friend that is capable of cheering you, but the poison it will leave behind will prove it a foe. We do not say that all novels are alike injurious, but it is sufficient to affirm that in general they are of this tendency. But, say you, may not works of fiction that embody truth be read with profit? Yes; but with *little* profit; you may get a *little* good, but with it a prodigious deal of evil. Even the writings of Sir Walter Scott have a spell about them which is likely to make you more and more in love with such kind of reading, and give you a distaste for every other. "Who does not know that they who are given to reading works of fiction, leave a mass of most valuable and

solid reading untouched and unknown?" And who, desirous of truth, and having but little time for its acquisition, would be so irrational as to read through a volume of fiction, because, perchance, a few of its pages might contain some truth? You would not, in travelling upon some important business, take a circuitous route, if there were a direct road to the place whither you were journeying; and why should you, in quest of knowledge, loiter on your course to its repository? why stay to be amused with every tinselled object that may present itself to your notice, when you know not but that circumstances may arise that may prevent you from ever obtaining much of this imperishable treasure? You may urge your plea for novel-reading upon the ground that it affords a relaxation to your mind. Were you much engaged in abstruse studies, you might with better grace urge this plea; but, even then, are there not an abundance of works of the most captivating description, and of the most edifying nature, by the reading of which your mind would have ample relaxation?

But you have no time to read for relaxation apart from edification; the time at best that you have for self-improvement is very contracted, and, therefore, you need to be exceedingly careful how you occupy it. It is not, however, solely on account of the time that is comparatively, and more often absolutely, lost in reading works of fiction, that you should shun them altogether, but on account of the evil influence that is excited on the mind after they have been perused. It is true that some minds may feel, after reading a novel, no exciting and injurious influence; but such minds are only exceptions, and are very rare; and few have a right to presume that they have such a mind. Works of fiction, in general, contain in them matter, not for the active exercise of thought, but for the idle play of the imagination. The wary lover, the fair but foolish maiden, their grief and joy, their sighs, their vows, their tears, are all so felicitously depicted in the amorous plot, as to render the perusal of it calculated to work upon the susceptibilities of your nature, and excite its passions, and unfit your mind to contemplate the sober realities of truth, and steadily to pursue that course of intellectual training which leads to the noble possession of moral wealth and true happiness. When you have laid down a novel, do you find yourself a better man than when you took it up? and is your mind more vigorous for the investigation of some important subject? Do you perform the monotonous duties of life with more success and pleasure, or do they not appear more dull and monoto-

nous than ever, so that you would fain have the wings of a dove, that you might flee to some fairy land, and quaff the cup of pleasure amid its enchanting scenery? It is not difficult to anticipate the answers that must be given to such questions. They are daily practically answered in the conversation, manners, and actions of novel-readers.

Let one young man devote his time to the reading of fiction, and another to the study of philosophy, and you will soon discover a development of character in the one, as different from that of the other as fiction is from philosophy. But what harm can accrue from reading a *little* of fictitious works? Your *little* reading is likely to end in *much* reading. Besides, if your little reading does you no harm, does it do you good? Remember that if you could gain more by giving your time to the reading of some other book than to the one which does you no harm, and you do not give it, you are a loser according to the old adage—a penny saved is a penny got. A person that might augment his property and does not, may be said to be a loser. The rule for you to adopt in improving your mind is, to secure as much time for it as you can, and to employ it to the best advantage. Act upon this firmly and constantly, and you cannot fail to get knowledge and rise in intelligence.

Politics is a branch of knowledge which it is advisable you should attend to moderately and cautiously. Thousands, in steering their course through life, have foundered in this dangerous sea. In voyaging on it, you need to be on your guard that you are not drawn into a most rapid vortex. To give intelligent consideration to the science of human government, is highly commendable and really important; but this is somewhat different from giving attention to that which is a mere substitute for this science, *viz.*, the factious politics of parties. In the present day, politics is only another word for the wrangling and bitter hostility of political sects, and the evil exhibition of party feeling; and those who are only happy when meddling with them, are more likely to acquire a facility in political abuse, than an aptness for comprehending political science. We do not say that you should not attend to what is going on in the political world, but that you should not attend to it with the avidity the mass of society generally do. If you desire to study the principles of civil government, and to ascertain what form of it is best adapted to secure the greatest amount of happiness to a nation at large, you must not merely go to the journals of the day, but to the writers on "political economy," and take up the subject as one requiring deep thought

and patient investigation. Few subjects do the generality of individuals think themselves more capable of discussing than those of a political nature, although their previous qualifications for it are often exceedingly inefficient. An attention to the political movements of the present day, without duly fortifying the mind against their seductive and all-absorbing influence, is likely to impede, if not entirely to prevent, intellectual progression. There is naturally in us more or less, at least in young persons, a love of novelty, change, and what is exciting. The result of an election, an expression in a parliamentary debate, the discharge of a servant of the Crown, and even a squabble among the ladies of the bed-chamber, will become a topic of conversation for a week or a month, in the mansion as well as in the cot. To talk on such subjects is easy work; and because it is so, too many like to adopt this mode of being *thought* intelligent. But they cannot succeed in sensible company. The proofs of a well-cultured mind lie beyond the capability of descanting on the news of the day. The most ungifted minds, the meanest intellects, are proficient at this.

The newspaper—that mighty organ of good and evil, attracting the attention of all classes of society, giving direction to human opinion, and influencing a world of mind—should be read in some intervening moments of the day, and not occupy any portion of that time which should be given to the systematic work of self-culture. In like manner should other periodicals, "excepting such as are devoted to grave discussions of important principles," together with every species of light reading, be dispatched, and never occupy the place due to study. Reading of this kind is, perhaps, the greatest drawback to real mental cultivation. Those who complain that they have not time for study, are often the very individuals who brood over the contents of a newspaper for hours, forgetting the amount of time they consume in this way in a year. We call it comparatively waste of time, for how little is retained of such reading; how few are able to recollect at the end of a week, a day, or an hour, a thousandth part of what they have gleaned from the journals and periodicals of the day! "After you have spent hours over them, it is very doubtful whether you have done anything more than crowd the mind with vague images and impressions, which decidedly weaken the memory." Let those who may be disinclined to credit this assertion test the truth of it in their own cases.

As to what you *should* read, a remark or two may comprise all that is necessary to be said on this point. Read the

writings of the best and the wisest of men, "such as others have tried, and can testify to their worth;" books which have bequeathed to their authors immortal fame. Of course, you must choose from among these according to your taste, and to the knowledge you are most deficient in; but only choose from among *such* books. To commune with great minds through their works is the surest way to become rich and powerful in thought, and to have expansive and noble views of truth. Who would talk with a novelist, when he might hold converse with a Milton or a Locke? "In reading the thoughts of such men, thoughts greater than the growth of our own minds are transplanted into them; and feelings more profound, sublime, or comprehensive, are insinuated amidst our ordinary train, while in the eloquence with which they are clothed we learn a new language, worthy of the new ideas that are created in us. Of how much pure and exalted enjoyment is he ignorant, who never entertained, as angels, the bright and loftier emanations of loftier intellects than his own! By habitual communion with superior spirits, we are not only enabled to think their thoughts, speak their dialects, feel their emotions, but our own thoughts are refined, our scanty language is enriched, our common feelings are elevated; and though we never attain their standard, yet, by keeping company with them, we shall rise above our own, as trees growing in the society of a forest are said to draw each other up into shapely and stately proportion, while field and hedgerow stragglers, exposed to all weathers, never reach their full stature, luxuriance, and beauty."

You would not deny that the best food is conducive to the health and vigour of the body; and is it not equally necessary that food for the mind should be of the best quality? It is not that inferior works contain nothing to benefit that we counsel you not to read them, but because there are works which would impart incalculably more benefit—because you should not toil for a shilling when you might obtain a pound. You may become mentally opulent, if you will gather up the treasures which the mightiest spirits of our earth have left behind them.

The greatest minds that were ever created, and who have passed away, have given their thoughts as a legacy to the world, a legacy common to all, and one more valuable than the wealth of empires. O, 'tis an elevated pleasure to converse with the wise—the great—the good; to summon, as it were, into our presence "the distant and the dead," and to have our minds strengthened and refreshed by their eloquence and wisdom.

If the works of some great authors be too extensive for your perusal, you may remedy this by reading abridgments of them. If you cannot read through the deep reasoning of many volumes, read through one. Because you cannot dig up all the wealth of a mine, do not cease to labour for a part of it. A page of some standard work is of more value than a volume which cost its author little more trouble than the mere act of writing. It is not *how much* you read that should be a matter of concern with you, but *what* you read. Many minds have had a nobility given to them — have been propelled on to noble achievements in learning from the perusal of one book. "If I may be allowed to speak of my own experience," says President Porter, "as a theological student, I would say, that to 'Edwards on the Will,' which I read at least three several times before I entered the ministry, besides frequent reviews of it since, I am more indebted than to all other human productions. The aid which it gave was to me invaluable." A bad book, especially a licentious one, has a reverse, but not less powerful, tendency; for it often gives a tone and bias to the mind, which last through life. Beware of such books; shun them as a pestilence, lest your moral nature become loathsomely corrupted, lest your end be shame and ruin.

But it is not only important *what* you read, but *how* you read. From a want of due attention to this, it is to be feared that numbers have profited but little from having read even the best of authors. It is as vain to cram the mind with knowledge if you wish to benefit from it, as it is to overcharge your stomach with food.

The mind must have time to digest by reflection what it receives. "Meditation and reflection are the better half of study." Accustom yourself, as you peruse a book, to pause at the end of every paragraph or sentence to consider what you have read; to ask yourself, do I understand it? do I believe it? is it true or false? Such a method as this will astonishingly expand and improve your mind, and accelerate your progress in knowledge.

But will not this method of reading be a *slow* one? Yes, very slow, but very sure and very profitable. By this method you will acquire a habit of thought, whereby you will be enabled to turn what you read to good account, and increase to a great extent the usefulness of your knowledge. Thought generates thoughts; one idea of a great author suggests to a reflecting mind a train of others, and frequently opens up a wide field for intellectual range. To have the power of creating

thoughts, of concentrating them upon any subject, of directing and controlling them at pleasure, is to have advanced far in self-improvement. "Intellectual culture consists not chiefly, as many are accustomed to think, in accumulating information, though this is important, but in building up a force of thought which may be turned at will on any subject on which we are called to pass judgment."

Our intercourse with great men through their works should not weaken our intellectual independence. We read to be better fitted to think and judge for ourselves, and not to pin our faith to the sleeve of any man, how extolled soever he may be, unless reason give consent. It is a fine characteristic of a noble mind to pay reverence to the opinions of great men, and yet not to allow them to shackle the free, patient, and independent action of its own. The mere act of gathering knowledge from books is similar to collecting materials for a building, valuable in themselves, but comparatively useless, without the exercise of that intellectual power which forms out of them a noble and beautiful structure. "It is not so important to know everything, as to know the exact value of everything; to appreciate what we learn, and to *arrange* what we know."

But books are not the only means of obtaining knowledge; much may be acquired from lectures, observation, and from the conversation of intelligent individuals. With respect to lectures, we certainly should advise you to be careful of what time you give to them, since the knowledge you might thence derive, could be more successfully obtained from books. In regard to the one method of communicating knowledge, you must keep pace with the lecturer, whilst in regard to the other, you can take your own time, and reflect as the subject is unfolded to you. On observation we need only remark, that there is no time nor place, circumstance, nor engagement, which excludes you from this method of improving your mind. The crowded objects of the city, as well as the more beauteous works of nature, impart instruction to those who are ready to learn; and you may find, to use the words of an immortal bard,—

> "—— tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

"Nature, revelation, the human soul, and human life, are freely unfolded to every eye. The great sources of wisdom are experience and observation, and these are denied to none. To open and fix our eyes upon what passes without and within us is the most fruitful study."

Sir Walter Scott said he had never met with a man, however humble his calling, but what he learned something from him. It is surprising to find individuals (as we sometimes do), who seem to know a little of everything, although they have never read nor studied much; we can only attribute it to their allowing nothing to escape their notice. A constant habit of observing what is passing around you should be cherished as a means of knowledge—knowledge, too, which is not conveyed to us by books.

As to conversation, much might be said on what is to be obtained in this way. Those who seek the best books for improvement, will surely seek virtuous and intelligent individuals for their companions. It is a great privilege to be acquainted with persons wiser than ourselves; you cannot but be improved by it if you will. It must be indeed your own fault, if you have to exclaim, "I have lost my time in the company of the learned." You cannot be long in the company of another without being either the better or the worse; you will (it may be imperceptibly) copy something from him. It was the advice of a professional gentleman of considerable talent and learning to a young friend who complained of want of more time for reading, to entertain at his house literary men, and thus he would acquire knowledge without labouring for it. "He who is permitted to draw from this great fountain, can hardly fail of having thought poured upon him sufficient to render him intelligent, even though he should never open a book." Varilles has said that "of ten things which he knew, he had learned nine from conversation."

Be choice, then, of your companions, if you wish to improve by them; act upon the advice of the wisest of men,—"Go from the presence of a foolish man when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge." Time is too valuable, and the space allotted to man too short, to fritter it away in the society of triflers, when it might be profitably and delightfully employed in the society of those who dispense light and intelligence in whatever circle they move. When you are in the company of one superior to yourself in intellect and acquirements, ply him with questions, obtain from him as much as you possibly can, without wearying him, or infringing on the laws of politeness. Shun, above everything, the companionship of those whose conversation is polluted by profaneness or licentiousness. Such will inevitably defile you, corrupt your manners, deteriorate your mind, vitiate your taste, and soon render you a complete counterpart of themselves. You may be slow

to learn what is good, but not so as to what is evil. You are more likely to copy from another what is bad, and leave what is good, than copy what is good, and leave what is bad. This is poor human nature, frail and weak at best. Young men are very apt, when together, to indulge in loose conversation; and hardly anything so assimilates them to the spirit of darkness as this, for it argues a degraded mind, a filthy taste, and a foul heart; for out of a pure heart can come forth nothing but what is pure. Besides, such conversation is so unmeaning, so useless, so wanton, so vile, and so destroying, that it should never be countenanced by any who have one spark of virtuous feeling within their breasts; but should be shunned as the noisome pestilence, and fled from as you would the fires of the bottomless pit.

That you may not be drawn into immoral company, or be exposed to the temptation of sharing in its giddy mirth, resort not to theatres, concert-rooms, or other places of fashionable amusements. Such a caution need not be given to those whose religious principles teach them "to flee youthful lusts and follow after righteousness." They have no sympathy with anything that has a tendency to deteriorate their moral nature; and that such places have such a tendency, we think, were it in harmony with the design of this treatise, and did space permit, we could easily demonstrate. But it is not only on moral, but also on intellectual grounds that we would counsel young men to forsake the retreats of gay amusements. To say the least, they allure without profiting, they engage the attention and engross a large portion of time without giving an equivalent in return; and it is not compatible with the dignity of a rational, an accountable, and an immortal being, to participate in amusements which are incapable of profiting.

There is naturally an inclination in young men rather to seek that which excites the passions, and pleasurably influences the senses, than that which especially engages the judgment and the reflecting faculties. This inclination is a sufficient obstacle to mental pursuits, without having fresh strength given to it; and with many, unless their love for acquiring knowledge be very ardent indeed, the temptation to listen to a well-sung song will be stronger than the inducement to read a well-written book; and the gaudy or ludicrous exhibitions of the playhouse will appear to them more attractive than any thing that could be presented in the lecture-room. Some will defend their nightly visits to the assemblies of the giddy and the gay, on the ground that they impart many moral lessons in

an agreeable manner, and give a better knowledge of men and manners than anything beside; but we need only adduce, in refutation of this position, the fact that the characters who frequent our "*evening entertainments*" are chiefly those whose motto is "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

We learn more of men and things in the reading-room, or the lecture-room, than at the card-table, the theatre, the dance, or the tavern revelry. If anything be learnt at such places it is the practice of immoral habits and loose conversation, and the proof of this is too frequently, alas! and too deplorably developed in practice to admit of a doubt. There is nothing in such recreations, if recreations they can be called, that can, in any way, assist those devoted to mental culture, or give facilities for the range of sober and elevated thought. The steady and anxious seeker of knowledge knows that there is a spell about them which strengthens the oftener these scenes are frequented, and that when a young man has once become fastened by it, the pursuits of inspiring literature must be abandoned, and systematic study forsaken as a chimerical enterprise. Those living in large towns, and at all desirous of having their minds enlightened, and their hearts purified, should especially be careful what amusements they seek, and what time they give to them; for the temptations in such towns are numerous, and more speedily than they are aware are they liable to fall into them. When once an inclination is created to pass a leisure hour in vain and idle amusements they will soon become unfitted for anything else, and all the endearing delights which accompany intellectual pursuits, and which once, it may be, they anticipated experiencing, will only become farther removed from them: whilst, as the love of sensual enjoyments waxes stronger and stronger, their mental and physical nature will, at length, be destroyed by reckless dissipation. Cultivate then, a taste for what is pure and intellectual, as the best means of being kept from imbibing what is impure and sensual, remembering "that there is a susceptibility of incessant elevation in the human character, enabling you to pass from the animal man to the rational man, from the rational to the intellectual man, from the intellectual to the spiritual man—transformed into the Divine image, and soaring to joys unutterable."

There is one thing more we must name which has a bearing upon our subject, and that is marriage.

Multitudes of young men have never been able to rise in mental attainments, or even in their own commercial occupations, above what is comparatively mean and grovelling; and

why? because they married *too soon*. They married before they had a competency to meet the expenses attendant upon this union, and they were never able to recover themselves. Their whole time and soul being engrossed about what they should eat and wherewithal they should be clothed, the cultivation of the mind was utterly forsaken, and left to be darkened by ignorance, and infested with errors. If you wish to settle in life so as to maintain through it a respectable standing as a commercial man, take care that you have, previous to your entering into the matrimonial state, well counted the cost, and made preparation accordingly. Be sure and lay a good foundation, before you attempt to rear the superstructure; and if you desire to pass through life with a good stock of knowledge, and to be respected for your intelligence and information, lay this stock up and cultivate your mind before you take that step which is inseparably connected with domestic cares.

You certainly may advance in knowledge in the married state, but it is highly probable you will not have the opportunity for the work of systematic study, and that your means of intellectual improvement will, at best, be irregular and precarious. How desirable is it to have both the head and the pocket replenished before taking upon you the marriage vow; for the wants which are inseparably connected with such a union draw largely both on the head and the pocket. The duties which devolve upon a parent are not those which may be undertaken without much consideration and previous attention to the right culture both of the head and heart. They are onerous, and involve great and solemn responsibility; and the rashness and thoughtlessness with which many young men enter into a state which entails upon them the discharge of parental duties is as astonishing as it is culpable, and can only be attributed to the want of that strength of judgment and reason to obtain which we urge them to remain longer in a state of celibacy.

Youth is the time for intellectual improvement; then, the spirits are buoyant, the mind active and capable of being trained and disciplined; habits are more easily rooted up; prejudices removed, and hope brighter in sustaining a spirit of perseverance. We are altogether, at that period, more alterable creatures. It is the spring of life, and the seed time, too, and if the season be well occupied in sowing, great expectations may be entertained of reaping a plenteous harvest; but neglect to sow then, and it is probable you will never sow

at all; and if you do it will be at an unfavourable season, for remember human life has no second spring. At this period the cares of domestic life have not cast their shadows over your "primrose path." You are, in a great measure, freed from those heavy duties which devolve more upon those who have passed on to the meridian of life. What you will be through life will, in a very great degree, be determined by what you are now.

If you neglect self-improvement now, it is very probable you will never do otherwise. The writer has frequently met with individuals who deplored the heedless and neglectful manner in which they suffered their youthful days to glide by—the advantages for mental improvement they disregarded, the frivolities with which they sought to fill up their leisure time; and who, though feeling and lamenting these things, and desirous of making some intellectual advancement during the remainder of their lives, confessed, with regret, that anxieties of a domestic kind and their own want of application arising from cherished habits opposed to studious pursuits, appeared obstacles in the way too great to be surmounted. Of how many is this the confession! Could such roll back the wheels of time, and commence again the journey of life, how gladly would they improve its spring time in the hope of reaping fruit in after years. But this, alas! cannot be, and the consequences of misemployed time will and must be felt without the power of recalling it. "O!" said one, as he lay dying, "call back time again; if you can call back time again then there may be hope for me; but time is gone!"

It must not, however, be supposed that there is no making up in more mature years somewhat for the neglect of self-culture at an earlier period. Numerous instances might be cited of individuals making considerable progress in learning, though they commenced comparatively late in life. But still these are exceptions; and what we wish to impress upon you is, that the rule is always to be taken, and not the exceptions. If, however, you have disregarded the cultivation of your mind during a period most advantageous for the work, do not continue to neglect it; still you may do something, and although you may not be able to acquire that amount of knowledge which you might have acquired had your mind been directed to it earlier, yet acquire what you can. Light is cheering and pleasant if its rays dart but faintly on our pathway. Remain not then, in darkness, because you may not expect the light of perfect day to pour in upon your soul. Let

no place or circumstance prevent your acquiring knowledge. Whenever and wherever a leisure moment offers, improve it; and, that you may be prepared to do this, always carry a book in your pocket. If the writer may speak his own experience on this point, he would say, that by following this course for years, he has acquired a considerable portion of his information. In waiting for another, if it be but for a minute or two, open your book, you may fasten on a sentence that will supply you with matter for thought for hours afterwards. You will be told that, in so doing, business will most likely be neglected, and that business must be attended to; but may it not be said in answer, that the mind must not be neglected, and that business cannot be neglected when there is no business to be transacted. The interest of a master is not more likely to be promoted when his servant is sitting or standing idle than when he is enlightening his mind by means of a book; for if he be not, in his spare moments, gathering up the thoughts of others, it is very probable that his own, like the fool's eye, will be wandering to the ends of the earth. Thousands in this great city waste a considerable fraction of their time in waiting for business. Now, if they cannot put forth fresh efforts to obtain it, it were better for them, till it comes, to occupy themselves in the important duty of mental culture. Time, invaluable time, should never be passed in idleness; for time with us, will soon be no more. Acquire knowledge, then, whenever you can. In all places, under all circumstances, acquire knowledge. Let your determination to acquire it be but fixed, and you will succeed.

Before concluding these few hints on self-culture, the writer would not forget to deepen on the minds of those to whom his observations have been directed, the great truth that self-culture, to be truly so, must be religious as well as intellectual. To cultivate only the mind is to cultivate only half the man. To neglect the moral improvement of the heart, the religious culture of the social and the benevolent affections, is to neglect a work, the noblest and the best, one which brings us into nearer union with the great Essence of Perfection, and assimilates us gradually to the likeness of that Being, who "sits enthroned upon the riches of the universe," and is at the head of all intelligences which are in heaven and upon the earth. Man is a religious being. In all countries he is found regarding some religious rites, and bowing the knee in worship to either the true God, or some supposed divinity. He cannot shake off the belief that there is a spirit that presides over his

destiny, that takes cognizance of his acts, and will ultimately accord rewards to the good and punishments to the wicked; and the hope and fear that alternately rise within his breast, and agitate his spirit when about to pass the threshold of time, convince him that though born to die, he is born to live for ever. Is it not, then, the highest consistency in him, the most rational work, to regard his spiritual cultivation which tends to perfect his nature, and render earth but as a stepping-stone to heaven? Religion is the perfect development and action of our moral nature, and her great teacher is Christianity; her laws can alone regulate the heart, her instructions guide to rectitude, her truths ennoble, exalt, and purify the mind; she is as a star to the benighted traveller, as a light from the rock that warns the mariner of danger and of ruin; and they who will be guided by the light she gives, shall be conducted safe through the mazes of earth to a city of eternal habitation. Guard against the weak and destructive notion that you can do without religion. Her tendencies are to draw out the affections of the soul towards God and man, and can you do without this and be happy? Can you disregard moral law and live in a state of purity and peace? Can you do without prayer and receive the favour of Heaven? Can you expect to cultivate your soul, to have your mind kept from the contamination of error, and guarded from the innovations of impure thoughts, when you never bend the knee in supplication to the Being in whose hands your life is, and by whose power and care all things are upheld and preserved? Do you commence the work of self-culture without looking up to Heaven for a blessing upon so great an undertaking? If so, the very heathens shame you, for "they felt so much need of aid in mental researches, that they seldom, if ever, began a study or a book without invoking the aid of the Gods." You have not only to improve yourself for the employments of time, but to prepare yourself for the engagements of eternity; and think not that the "Crown of Glory" will be proffered to those who never sought it, nor that an inheritance in Paradise will be apportioned to those who never craved it. Do your natural desires so lead you to do that which is right, that you need no Divine warnings and admonitions to keep you in the path of rectitude? Let the history of human nature show you the folly—the madness—of entertaining such preposterous ideas. When men have sought only to obey their inclinations, to what has it led them? It has made some of them tyrants, aiming only to keep in a state of vassalage the minds and bodies of men—some, warriors delighting in carnage, and

exulting amidst the desolations of war; others it has made covetous, licentious, and utterly disregardful of every principle that elevates and adorns our common humanity. The history of mankind for nearly six thousand years is little else than a history of rapine, cruelty, and blood; and why? because men have bowed in base submission to the dictates of their passions. Such are the acts of men when they throw off all moral restraints.

Beware, then, of infidelity. Young men who would be ashamed to be thought avowed infidels, are often tinctured with its foul spirit; they are prone to be sceptical—to entertain loose and vague ideas as to the true standard of morals and religion. We would urge such to look at infidelity in her naked deformity, and ask what has she done for man? Has she subdued the passions of his nature—calmed his troubled spirit—quieted his angry feelings—renovated his affections—exalted his desires—and given him a taste for what is pure, lovely, and noble? Has she strengthened his soul to bear the brunt of life, and to submit to its frowns and misfortunes? Has she administered consolation at his bedside when disease has laid him prostrate, or brightened up his last moments with the hope of a blessed immortality? Has she done this? if so, when, where, or to whom? Did she do it for Voltaire, Paine, Rousseau, or Hume—men who lived sensually and died wretchedly? *No;* she has ever cursed all who have embraced her, and by sanctioning the unbridled indulgence of every passion, has held them in a bondage more vile than is that of the veriest slave that writhes under the lash of his despotic lord. Her influence is fearful in its soul-destroying tendency, and when she has held dominion in a country, she has transformed its moral beauty into all that is unlovely and revolting; she has sunk its inhabitants in dissipation, broke down the barriers which preserved its social order and guarded its morals, and caused sensuality, with all its attending horrors, to break in upon it in one devouring tide. If you wish to render yourself most unlike the Being who made you—to live and act most in opposition to those laws which are "holy, just, and good"—to blunt most successfully the sympathies of your nature—to make your heart most impregnable to the cries of afflicted humanity—to deteriorate your intellect, and to thwart utterly the great end of your existence—embrace infidelity; she will most completely ally you to the God of this world, and lead you to the "blackness of darkness for ever."

But why do young men have any sympathy with infidelity? Is it not because she favours the gratification of their carnal desires—puts no curb upon the indulgence of their appetites? This is the secret of men's becoming infidels. They dislike Christianity—yes; for she utters her voice against "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," and proffers her blessings only to those who are "pure in heart." But her blessings are "to be desired above gold, yea, above fine gold." You cannot prosecute the culture of the soul, nor, indeed, rightly that of the mind, unless you are willing to sit at her feet to receive her heavenly instructions, and submit to her righteous laws. If you refuse, you are liable to be borne away by every impulse of your nature, to become the helpless captive of your ungovernable passions, to seek the blandishments of false pleasure which enchain while they please, and to be urged onward in the career of self-gratification, till plunged into the deep and dark abyss of sensuality, you are lost irrevocably and for ever.

The majority of men are governed by their senses, which are ever ready to rule; and the scenes of every day show how easily they gain the ascendancy, and how fearful is their dominion. And what else can govern man, if he rejects the laws of Heaven and "the truth that can make him free indeed!"

What system of morals—what religious belief can he embrace, so calculated to render him useful and happy, as the religion of Him "who was declared to be the Son of God with power?"—a religion which teaches man that he is born for a nobler end than that of gratifying the desires of his nature and then sleeping the sleep of death; that he is born for purposes high and worthy of the Being who made him; that he is to rise above what is sensual and material to feel that "no thought can measure the grandeur of his nature, that is the image of God, the image even of his unfolding;" that his actions in time are to influence his destiny through eternity; that all mankind are but one great family of one Almighty Father, capable of serving and loving him, and of being rendered ultimately fit to dwell in his presence for ever. These are the views which Christianity teaches us respecting man—views which, if entertained, will produce in you a corresponding development of character, as they have done in thousands who have been blessings to their species. "Others may talk of philanthropy and benevolence, but who give their hearts and energies for the salvation of the world, except those whose

minds have been enlightened, and whose hearts have been impressed, by the truths of Christianity? Who built the first hospital known on earth? A Christian. Who conceived the idea of free-schools for the whole community? A Christian. Who are the men who have pushed civilization among the barbarous—who have broken the fetters both from body and mind, and created civil liberty for man? Who ever made efforts, vigorous, systematic, untiring, to spread free inquiry and raise the intellectual and moral character of mankind? They are the enlightened men who act under the influence of the Bible." Do you desire to take your stand on the side of those who have been and are as "angels of mercy" to our world—do you desire to have the affections of your soul drawn out towards the Infinite Good, and the sympathies of your heart to blend with all who in common with yourself are subjected to those "ills which flesh is heir to"—do you wish to know the bliss of an unaccusing conscience, of the life-giving promise of pardon, and of the anticipation of having your nature perfected when "the graves shall give up the dead," and of sharing in the joys and employments of those unfallen and redeemed spirits who encircle the throne of the Great Eternal—then listen to the voice that speaketh to you from Heaven, and study "the book writ with an immortal pen;" act upon its principles, and live under its inspiring influence.

Let that Word which has concentrated upon itself the attention and energies of the highest intellects that ever illumined our world—which has been admired and loved by all the hosts of worthies who wrought righteousness in their generation, and went to their rest full of hope and full of honors—which has exerted a moral power that has transformed the savage into a tender parent, an intelligent citizen, and a devout worshipper of the Lord of heaven and earth—let that Word be the guide of your youth, your counsellor, your instructor, and your constant companion through all your earthly journey. The day in which we live is rampant with error; sin is presenting itself to you in a thousand insinuating forms, and even soliciting you to become its votary under the disguise of religion. There never was a period in which it was more important to have settled principles in religion, to have your soul fortified by truth, and your mind enlightened by knowledge, than the present. The signs of the times are ominous. There is going on around us a mighty conflict between truth and error—

good and evil. The powers of darkness are being shaken; while science and art, the changes and revolutions of nations, are all urging forward the universal and triumphant reign of "pure and undefiled religion." You are called upon to act your part, and to be a worker together with all who are endeavouring to raise from its low and fallen state the moral and intellectual nature of man.

Are there not reasons, then, of the most powerful kind, why you should seize upon every opportunity for the work of moral and mental culture; why, amid the duties of your secular callings, you should seek the improvement of your noblest part? Neglect it you may, but not without a loss for which nothing can compensate. You are a progressive being; stationary you cannot remain; you must either advance on the upward path of virtue and of wisdom, or be hurried down the steep of sin and folly. Think of the pleasures of the one, and the bitter reflections attendant upon the other; think of the sorrows you may avoid, and the joys you may claim as your own—joys which are yours in the gloom of adversity as well as in the sunny light of prosperity—which accompany you in the crowd of busy life, and are with you in the unbroken silence of the chamber—joys comporting with the dignity of your nature, and which leave no sting behind.

If, then, self-culture be to expand and elevate the mind; to enlarge your ideas; to purify your affections; to ennoble your desires; to capacitate you for the contemplation of what is great and good; to expand the benevolence of your nature, and fit you to accomplish the great purposes of your creation—if this be self-culture, O! then, awake to its importance. Set your heart to the work; with high expectations pursue it, and pursue it like one conscious of the dignity and immortality of his being.

THE END.

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